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SUBJECT: MEPI 1ST QUARTER UPDATE FOR MOROCCO

REF: 08 Rabat 1724

¶1. Summary: This cable highlights the MEPI programs and initiatives undertaken in Morocco from September 1 - December 31, 2008. During the quarter, MEPI's Tunis Regional Office Deputy Director Kirk Samson visited Morocco and post approved two new local grant proposals. Highlights from existing programs included activities by the Advancing Learning and Employability for a Better Future (ALEF), Association Action Jeunesse (2AJ) and MIT Media. Implementers are partnering with local NGOs at the grassroots level to support numerous programs committed to reform in the four MEPI pillars. End summary.

MEPI VISITORS

¶2. MEPI Tunis Regional Office Deputy Director Kirk Samson visited Rabat October 15-18, 2008 to meet potential recipients for MEPI local grants. In Casablanca, Samson met Consul General Elisabeth Millard and two local grant recipients: 2AJ, working with youth and election issues; and MIT Media, offering training of trainers on e-journalism subject matter. In Rabat, Samson held meetings with Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Robert Jackson, members of Mission's Democracy Working Group and USAID representatives. He also discussed MEPI Local Grant funding opportunities with potential recipients as well as MEPI implementers such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the American Bar Association (ABA), the State University of New York (SUNY), and MTDS-Tanmia. Members of the Morocco MEPI Alumni Network and local MEPI implementers attended a reception in honor of Samson hosted by the DCM. Samson also met with Emboffs to discuss ways to improve coordination efforts in MEPI programs.

NEW MEPI LOCAL GRANTS

¶3. In October, the Mission approved two new MEPI local grants totaling USD 98,173. The first recipient, the Moroccan Education and Resource Network (MEARN), will initiate a community service project to help students and youth take actions in their communities. In the second, the Association du Nord pour le Developpement Educatif et Economique

(ANDEE) will promote public participation in education and boost social corporate responsibility awareness by supporting three high schools in creating partnerships with community businesses and the private sector to sponsor and support school programs.

ALEF ACTIVITIES

¶4. During this reporting period, ALEF launched activities in support of literacy program delivery in six regions, working with over 140 local associations and reaching in excess of 30,000 women and men (less than 10 percent of whom were men) and with over 1,100 trained literacy trainers. ALEF emphasized to us that the main purpose of the program is not to attain great numbers but rather to develop the training manual and program and to help the Ministry of National Education revise its learners' manual. ALEF is making progress but is constrained by the fact that the government has yet to authorize the new literacy agency. Specific activities included: a training workshop on management procedures of the literacy program in September, a training of trainers workshop on the Passerelles (Pre-literacy programs) model in October, and a workshop on the production of a "training of literacy trainers" CD-Rom.

MIT MEDIA ACTIVITIES

¶5. On October 30 and 31 Information Officer David Ranz and Information Resource Center Director Malika Baiz attended the opening of the first in a series of MEPI-funded "E-journalism and new media" training sessions for young, primarily regional, journalists. Seventeen journalists, most of them at the beginning of their careers, had the opportunity to learn new media techniques, such as blogging and podcasting. A second session took place in Agadir on November 15 and 16, with 19 local journalists present. Participants expressed their appreciation for the program, and these sessions have received positive press coverage on the internet.

ALMOSTAQBAL PROJECT LAUNCH

¶6. On December 20, 2AJ launched its recently approved MEPI local grant in Casablanca. The event gathered representatives of two local NGOs from each of the six cities where the program will be implemented. The participants at this launching event discussed the program agenda and ways to best implement this project in the selected high schools. 2AJ, a grantee with an excellent track record, will repeat the successful local high school election program in six cities throughout Morocco. It will work with NGOs from each city, train them in the process and assist them in conducting these elections. The students will also have the opportunity to interact with local officials through office visits and discussions.

¶7. A detailed description of MEPI programs in Morocco can be found on the Mission unclassified Internet web page at www.usembassy.ma.

JACKSON